

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-20. (canceled).

21. (currently amended): A method of etching a chromium-based thin film, the thin film comprising chromium, by use of a resist pattern placed thereon as a mask,

comprising

supplying a plasma excitation power to a dry etching gas to excite plasma so that a chemical species is generated, said dry etching gas comprising ~~halogen and oxygen~~ Cl₂ and O₂, and

carrying out the etching of the thin film by use of the chemical species,

wherein the plasma excitation power is lower than a plasma excitation power at which a plasma density jump occurs so that verticalness of the sectional shape of the pattern formed ~~on~~ in the thin film ~~be~~ is enhanced.

22. (currently amended): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 21, wherein at least a part of the chemical species is supplied in the direction perpendicular to the thin film so that the resist layer which forms the resist pattern is etched to generate an organic substance, and

an etching selectivity S between a resist layer and the thin film is smaller than 1.5, whereby S is defined as:

$$S = (\text{etching rate of the thin } \del{film} \text{ film} / \text{etching rate of the resist layer}) .$$

23. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 22, wherein at least a part of the chemical species is supplied in the direction perpendicular to the thin film by applying a high-frequency power.

24. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 23, wherein the resist layer which forms the resist pattern has a coverage of 70% or more of the thin film.

25. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 24, wherein the high-frequency power is applied so that an organic substance be deposited on a side wall of the resist pattern and to be etched by an isotropic etching component generated during the etching.

26. (canceled).

27. (currently amended): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim ~~26~~ 25, wherein the dry etching gas further contains helium.

28. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 27, wherein the thin film is etched in presence of an organic substance other than that derived from the resist layer.

29. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 28, wherein the organic substance other than that derived from the resist layer comprises an organic gas which is introduced to the dry etching gas.

30. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 28, wherein an organic substance other than that derived from the resist layer comprises an organic polymer which is disposed in an etching chamber where etching is carried out.

31. (currently amended): A method of etching a chromium-based thin film by processing an object comprising the chromium-based thin film containing chromium, by use of a resist pattern placed thereon as a mask,

comprising

supplying a plasma excitation power to a dry etching gas to excite plasma so that a chemical species is generated, said dry etching gas comprising ~~halogen and oxygen~~ Cl₂ and O₂, and

carrying out the etching of the thin film by use of the chemical species,
wherein:

the thin film is etched in presence of an organic substance other than that derived from a resist layer which forms the resist pattern.

32. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 31, wherein a resist layer which forms the resist pattern has a coverage smaller than 70% of the thin film.

33. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 32, wherein the organic substance comprises an organic gas which is introduced to the dry etching gas.

34. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 33, wherein the amount of the organic gas is 30 vol% or less of the dry etching gas.

35. (previously presented): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 34, wherein the organic gas comprises ethanol.

36. (currently amended): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim 32, wherein ~~an~~ the organic substance comprises an organic polymer which is disposed in an etching chamber where etching is carried out.

37. (canceled).

38. (currently amended): The method of etching a chromium-based thin film according to claim ~~37~~ 36, wherein the dry etching gas further contains helium.

39. (currently amended): A method of manufacturing a photo mask from a photo mask blank comprising a transparent substrate and a light-shielding thin film formed on the transparent substrate, said thin film comprising chromium,

said method comprising etching the thin film by use of a resist pattern placed thereon as a mask,

said etching comprising:

supplying a plasma excitation power to a dry etching gas to excite plasma so that a chemical species is generated, said dry etching gas comprising ~~a halogen and oxygen~~ Cl₂ and O₂, and

carrying out the etching of the thin film by use of the chemical species,

wherein the plasma excitation power is lower than a plasma excitation power at which a plasma density jump occurs, ~~so that verticalness of the sectional shape of the pattern formed on the thin film be enhanced~~ and at least a part of the chemical species is supplied toward the thin film in a direction perpendicular to the thin film.

40. (currently amended): The method of manufacturing a photo mask according to claim 39, wherein at least a part of the chemical species is supplied in the direction perpendicular to the thin film so that the resist layer which forms the resist pattern is etched to generate an organic substance, and

an etching selectivity S between a resist layer and the thin film is smaller than 1.5, whereby S is defined as:

$$S = (\text{etching rate of the thin film} / \text{etching rate of the resist layer}) .$$

41. (previously presented): The method of manufacturing a photo mask according to claim 40, wherein, by etching the thin film, a pattern including an optical proximity correction (OPC) pattern is formed.

42. (currently amended): The method of manufacturing a photo mask according to claim 39, wherein, by etching the thin film, a pattern including a pattern of which a design size is ~~4- 0.4~~ 0.4 μm or more and 2.0 μm or less and of which a CD linearity error is 15nm or less is formed.

43. (currently amended): A method of manufacturing a photo mask from a photo mask blank comprising a transparent substrate and a light-shielding thin film formed on the transparent substrate, said thin film comprising chromium,

said method comprising etching the thin film by use of a resist pattern placed thereon as a mask,

said etching comprising:

supplying a plasma excitation power to a dry etching gas to excite plasma so that a chemical species is generated, said dry etching gas comprising ~~halogen and oxygen~~ Cl₂ and O₂ ,
and

carrying out the etching of the thin film by use of the chemical species,
wherein the thin film is etched in presence of an organic substance other than that derived from a resist layer which forms the resist pattern.

44. (new) The method of Claim 23 wherein a high-frequency power is applied to the chemical species, said plasma excitation power being at least 10 times of the high-frequency power.

45. (new) The method of Claim 39 wherein a high-frequency power is applied to the chemical species, said plasma excitation power being at least 10 times of the high-frequency power.